

November 6, 2003

Public Notice for 401 Certification

Saddle Mountain Ranch Sonoma County

On March 5, 2002 the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received septic designs for a project called Saddle Mountain Ranch (Ranch). Staff of the Regional Water Board requested additional information about the project. After receiving the needed information, staff determined that the project needed Water Quality Certification. On January 28, 2003 the Regional Water Board received an application from Mr. Mark Von Tagen, on behalf of the Merner Land Company, requesting approval for disturbances to waters of the State and other water quality impacts associated with the development of the proposed project.

The proposed project consists of a 29-lot subdivision off of 2350 Calistoga Road. Approximately 1350 acres of the Ranch currently exist within the jurisdiction of Sonoma County. However, included in that acreage is a designated remainder and three open-space parcels, so not all of the stated acreage is part of a lot or other proposed development area. Developments associated with this project include paved roads, which will for the most part be constructed by widening and paving pre-existing dirt roads; a bridge; storm drain systems and outfalls; and trails. Houses will be built on the lots by the individuals who purchase the lots.

There are 4 creeks on the property, all of which flow year-round: Weeks Creek, Alpine Creek, Van Buren Creek, and Ducker Creek. All of the creeks are part of the Mark West Creek Watershed, with the exception of Ducker Creek, which is part of the Santa Rosa Creek Watershed. The entire property is mildly to steeply sloped, with very few flat areas. Vegetation types on the property include grassland, chaparral, oak woodland, oak savanna, and mixed evergreen forest. There are also two wetlands on the site which will be preserved. However, the project impacts that are being reviewed for Water Quality Certification at this time include the construction of a bridge over Alpine Creek, the construction of storm drain outfalls, and the construction of a culvert.

The proposed bridge over Alpine Creek is a clear-span, that will be placed outside the top-of-bank. Due to the type of bridge being proposed, there should be no significant impacts to the creek channel. A total of 16548 square feet of swale habitat on the property will also be disturbed as part of the proposed Project. However, a total of 17921 square feet of new swale habitat will be created, for a net gain of 1373 square feet of swale.

Consulting agencies for this project include the California Department of Fish and Game, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service (formerly National Marine Fisheries Service).

At this time the Regional Water Quality Control Board is in the process of reviewing the proposed project regarding the issuance of the 401 Certification Permit. In addition, the Regional Water Quality Control Board will consider all comments received during a 21-day comment period that begins on the first date of issuance of this letter. If you have any questions or comments, please contact staff member Andrew Jensen by email at jensa@rb1.swrcb.ca.gov, or send comments to the Regional Water Quality Control Board, 5550 Skylane Boulevard, Suite A, Santa Rosa, CA 95403.